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# ON A STABILITY OF THE BURGERS VORTEX WITH RESPECT TO THREE DIMENSIONAL PERTURBATIONS

*Dedicated to Professor Kenji Nishihara on his sixtieth birthday*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Burgers vortices are exact stationary solutions to the three dimensional Navier-Stokes equations, and they represent a balance between two basic mechanisms in fluid dynamics - vorticity stretching effect and diffusion effect. The Burgers vortices are also known as a simple model of vortex tubes which are coherent structures observed in turbulent flows [23, 12]. For this reason they have been widely studied physically [13, 18, 21, 3, 22] and mathematically [11, 2, 10, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 5]. In this report we discuss three dimensional stability of the Burgers vortex and introduce a recent result obtained by [5] on this problem.

## 2. FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

We consider the Navier-Stokes equations for viscous incompressible flows in  $\mathbb{R}^3$ ,

$$(2.1) \quad \partial_t V - \nu \Delta V + (V, \nabla)V + \frac{1}{\rho} \nabla P = 0, \quad \nabla \cdot V = 0.$$

Here  $V(x, t) = (V_1(x, t), V_2(x, t), V_3(x, t))^T$  and  $P(x, t)$  denote the velocity field and the pressure field, respectively, and the parameters in (2.1) are the kinematic viscosity  $\nu > 0$  and the density  $\rho > 0$ . We assume that the velocity  $V$  has the form

$$(2.2) \quad V = V^s + U.$$

Here  $V^s$  is a given background straining flow defined by (2.3) below,

$$(2.3) \quad V^s(x) = \gamma \left( -\frac{x_1}{2}, -\frac{x_2}{2}, x_3 \right)^T = \gamma Mx,$$

and  $U$  is the unknown perturbation velocity field. The parameter  $\gamma > 0$  describes the magnitude of the straining flow, and  $M$  is a matrix of the form

$$M = \begin{pmatrix} -\frac{1}{2} & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -\frac{1}{2} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

By performing the scaling transformation

$$\tilde{x} = \left(\frac{\gamma}{\nu}\right)^{\frac{1}{2}} x, \quad \tilde{t} = \gamma t, \quad \tilde{V} = \frac{V}{(\gamma\nu)^{\frac{1}{2}}}, \quad \tilde{P} = \frac{P}{\rho\gamma\nu},$$

we may assume that  $\gamma = \nu = \rho = 1$ . For simplicity of notations we use  $x$  and  $t$  for  $\tilde{x}$  and  $\tilde{t}$ . From the assumption of  $V = V^s + U$ , the equation for the vorticity field  $\Omega = \nabla \times V = \nabla \times U$  is given by

$$(2.4) \quad \partial_t \Omega - L\Omega + (U, \nabla)\Omega - (\Omega, \nabla)U = 0, \quad \nabla \cdot \Omega = 0.$$

Here  $L$  is a partial differential operator defined by

$$(2.5) \quad L\Omega = \Delta\Omega - (Mx, \nabla)\Omega + M\Omega.$$

The velocity field  $U$  is formally recovered from the vorticity field  $\Omega$  via the Biot-Savart law

$$(2.6) \quad U(x, t) = (K_{3D} * \Omega)(x, t) = -\frac{1}{4\pi} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \frac{(x - y) \times \Omega(y, t)}{|x - y|^3} dy.$$

If  $U$  is two dimensional, that is, if  $U(x, t) = (U_1(x_h, t), U_2(x_h, t), 0)^\top$ ,  $x_h = (x_1, x_2)^\top \in \mathbb{R}^2$ , then the associated  $\Omega$  becomes  $\Omega(x, t) = (0, 0, \Omega_3(x_h, t))^\top$ , and (2.6) is replaced by the two dimensional Biot-Savart law

$$(2.7) \quad U_h(x_h, t) = (K_{2D} * \Omega_3)(x_h, t) = \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_{\mathbb{R}^2} \frac{(x_h - y_h)^\perp}{|x_h - y_h|^2} \Omega_3(y_h, t) dy_h.$$

Here  $U_h = (U_1, U_2)^\top$  and  $x_h^\perp = (-x_2, x_1)^\top$ .

We set the vorticity field  $G$  as

$$(2.8) \quad G(x) = (0, 0, g(x_h))^\top, \quad g(x_h) = \frac{1}{4\pi} e^{-|x_h|^2/4}.$$

Then by direct calculations we can check that  $\{\alpha G\}_{\alpha \in \mathbb{R}}$  gives a family of stationary solutions to (2.4). The velocity field associated with  $G$  is

$$(2.9) \quad U^G(x) = u^g(|x_h|^2)(-x_2, x_1, 0)^\top, \quad u^g(r) = \frac{1}{2\pi r}(1 - e^{-\frac{r}{4}}).$$

The vorticity field  $\alpha G$  is called the (axisymmetric) Burgers vortex. The parameter  $\alpha$  is the circulation number which represents the magnitude of the vorticity field. To consider the asymptotic stability of the Burgers vortex, we first note the following lemma.

**Lemma 2.1.** *If  $\Omega \in (L^1_{loc}(\mathbb{R}; L^1(\mathbb{R}^2)))^3$  satisfies  $\nabla \cdot \Omega = 0$  in the sense of distributions, then there exists  $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$  such that  $\int_{\mathbb{R}^2} \Omega_3(x_h, x_3) dx_h = \alpha$  for a.e.  $x_3 \in \mathbb{R}$ .*

Although it is easily proved by the integration by parts, Lemma 2.1 is useful since the quantity  $\int_{\mathbb{R}^2} \Omega_3(x_h, x_3, t) dx_h$  is conserved under the equation (2.4). Especially, if the solution  $\Omega$  to (2.4) converges to  $\alpha G$  at time infinity, then the value  $\alpha$  is determined in terms of the initial data, i.e., we must have  $\alpha = \int_{\mathbb{R}^2} \Omega_3(x_h, x_3, 0) dx_h$ .

### 3. MAIN RESULTS

To state our main results, we introduce function spaces. Since the Burgers vortex is essentially a two-dimensional flow, it is natural to choose a function space which allows for perturbations in the same class. Following [8], we assume that the perturbations are localized in the horizontal variables, but merely bounded in the vertical direction. For each  $m > 1$  we set  $\rho_m$  by

$$(3.1) \quad \rho_m(r) = (1 + \frac{r}{4m})^m, \quad r \geq 0.$$

Then we introduce the weighted  $L^2$  space

$$(3.2) \quad L^2(m) = \{f \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^2) \mid \int_{\mathbb{R}^2} |f(x_h)|^2 \rho_m(|x_h|^2) dx_h < \infty\}$$

$$(3.3) \quad L^2_0(m) = \{f \in L^2(m) \mid \int_{\mathbb{R}^2} f(x_h) dx_h = 0\}.$$

Next, we define the three-dimensional space  $X(m)$  as the set of all  $\phi : \mathbb{R}^3 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  for which the map  $x_h \mapsto \phi(x_h, x_3)$  belongs to  $L^2(m)$  for any  $x_3 \in \mathbb{R}$ , and is a bounded and continuous function of  $x_3$ . In other words, we set

$$(3.4) \quad X(m) = BC(\mathbb{R}; L^2(m)), \quad X_0(m) = BC(\mathbb{R}; L^2_0(m)),$$

which are equipped with the norm

$$\|\phi\|_{X(m)} = \sup_{x_3 \in \mathbb{R}} \|\phi(\cdot, x_3)\|_{L^2(m)}.$$

Then our main result is stated as follows.

**Theorem 3.1.** *Let  $m > 2$ . Assume that  $\Omega_0 = (\Omega_{0,1}, \Omega_{0,2}, \Omega_{0,3})^\top$  belongs to  $X(m)^3$  and satisfies  $\nabla \cdot \Omega_0 = 0$ . Set  $\alpha = \int_{\mathbb{R}^2} \Omega_{0,3}(x_h, x_3) dx_h$ . Then there exist  $\delta$  and  $C$  such that if  $\|\Omega_0 - \alpha G\|_{X(m)^3} \leq \delta$ , then Eq. (2.4) has a unique solution  $\Omega \in L^\infty(0, \infty; X(m)^3)$  with initial data  $\Omega_0$ . Moreover, it satisfies*

$$(3.5) \quad \|\Omega(t) - \alpha G\|_{X(m)^3} \leq C e^{-\frac{t}{2}} \|\Omega_0 - \alpha G\|_{X(m)^3}, \quad t \geq 0.$$

Here  $\delta$  and  $C$  depend only on  $\alpha$  and  $m$ .

**Remark 3.1.** Theorem 3.1 was firstly proved by [8] under the assumption of  $|\alpha| \ll 1$ . The smallness of  $|\alpha|$  is removed by [5].

Set

$$(3.6) \quad \mathbb{X}(m) = X(m) \times X(m) \times X_0(m),$$

which is invariant under (2.4). Theorem 3.1 shows that the Burgers vortex  $\alpha G$  is asymptotically stable with respect to perturbations in  $\mathbb{X}(m)$ , for any value of the circulation  $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$ . However, the constants  $\delta$  and  $C$  in Theorem 3.1 depend on  $\alpha$  in such a way that  $\delta(\alpha, m) \rightarrow 0$  and  $C(\alpha, m) \rightarrow \infty$  as  $|\alpha| \rightarrow \infty$ .

To prove Theorem 3.1 it is useful to consider the equation for  $\omega = \Omega - \alpha G$  in  $\mathbb{X}(m)$ ,

$$(3.7) \quad \begin{cases} \partial_t \omega - (L - \alpha \Lambda) \omega &= -(K_{3D} * \omega, \nabla) \omega + (\omega, \nabla) K_{3D} * \omega, & x \in \mathbb{R}^3, \quad t > 0, \\ \nabla \cdot \omega(t) &= 0, & x \in \mathbb{R}^3, \quad t > 0, \\ \omega|_{t=0} &= \omega_0, & x \in \mathbb{R}^3. \end{cases}$$

Here  $\Lambda$  is a linear operator defined by

$$(3.8) \quad \Lambda \omega = (K_{3D} * G, \nabla) \omega - (\omega, \nabla) K_{3D} * G + (K_{3D} * \omega, \nabla) G - (G, \nabla) K_{3D} * \omega.$$

The key step to prove Theorem 3.1 is to analyze the linearized problem

$$(3.9) \quad \begin{cases} \partial_t \omega - (L - \alpha \Lambda) \omega &= 0, & x \in \mathbb{R}^3, \quad t > 0 \\ \omega|_{t=0} &= \omega_0 & x \in \mathbb{R}^3. \end{cases}$$

Especially,  $L - \alpha \Lambda$  has a uniform spectral gap for all  $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$ , which leads to a uniform decay  $e^{-\frac{t}{2}}$  in (3.5). More precisely, we can show

**Theorem 3.2.** *Let  $m > 2$ . Assume that  $\omega_0 = (\omega_{0,1}, \omega_{0,2}, \omega_{0,3})^\top \in \mathbb{X}(m)$  satisfies  $\nabla \cdot \omega_0 = 0$ . Then Eq. (3.9) has a unique solution  $\omega \in L^\infty(0, \infty; \mathbb{X}(m))$  with initial data  $\omega_0$  and it satisfies*

$$(3.10) \quad \|\omega(t)\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)} \leq C e^{-\frac{t}{2}} \|\omega_0\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)}, \quad t \geq 0.$$

Here  $C$  depends only on  $\alpha$  and  $m$ .

**3.1. Key lemmas for the linearized operator  $L - \alpha\Lambda$ .** In this section we collect several properties of  $L$  and  $\Lambda$  which are keys to prove Theorem 3.2. We first consider the operator  $L$ . Setting

$$(3.11) \quad \mathcal{L}_h = \Delta_h + \frac{x_h}{2} \cdot \nabla_h + 1 = \sum_{j=1}^2 \partial_{x_j}^2 + \sum_{j=1}^2 \frac{x_j}{2} \partial_{x_j} + 1,$$

$$(3.12) \quad \mathcal{L}_3 = \partial_{x_3}^2 - x_3 \partial_{x_3},$$

we write  $L\omega$  as

$$L\omega = \begin{pmatrix} L_h \omega_h \\ L_3 \omega_3 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} (\mathcal{L}_h + \mathcal{L}_3 - \frac{3}{2}) \omega_h \\ (\mathcal{L}_h + \mathcal{L}_3) \omega_3 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Since the semigroups associated with  $\mathcal{L}_h$  and  $\mathcal{L}_3$  are explicitly given by

$$(3.13) \quad e^{t\mathcal{L}_h} \phi = \frac{1}{4\pi a(t)} \int_{\mathbb{R}^2} e^{-\frac{|x_h - y_h e^{-\frac{t}{2}}|^2}{4a(t)}} \phi(y_h) dy_h, \quad a(t) = 1 - e^{-t},$$

$$(3.14) \quad e^{t\mathcal{L}_3} \phi = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi b(t)}} \int_{\mathbb{R}} e^{-\frac{|x_3 e^{-t} - y_3|^2}{2b(t)}} \phi(y_3) dy_3, \quad b(t) = 1 - e^{-2t},$$

we have the representation of the semigroup for  $L_3$  such as

$$(3.15) \quad e^{tL_3} \phi = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi b(t)}} \int_{\mathbb{R}} e^{-\frac{|x_3 e^{-t} - y_3|^2}{2b(t)}} (e^{t\mathcal{L}_h} \phi(\cdot, y_3))(x_h) dy_3.$$

Hence the semigroup associated with  $L$  is given by

$$(3.16) \quad e^{tL} \omega_0 = (e^{-\frac{3}{2}t} e^{tL_3} \omega_{0,1}, e^{-\frac{3}{2}t} e^{tL_3} \omega_{0,2}, e^{tL_3} \omega_{0,3})^\top.$$

In [6] the following estimates for  $e^{t\mathcal{L}_h}$  are obtained:

$$(3.17) \quad \|e^{t\mathcal{L}_h} f\|_{L^2(m)} \leq C \|f\|_{L^2(m)}, \quad f \in L^2(m), \quad m > 1,$$

$$(3.18) \quad \|e^{t\mathcal{L}_h} f\|_{L^2(m)} \leq C e^{-\frac{t}{2}} \|f\|_{L^2(m)}, \quad f \in L_0^2(m), \quad m > 2.$$

Combining these with (3.13)-(3.16), we can show that

$$(3.19) \quad \|e^{tL} f\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)} \leq C e^{-\frac{t}{2}} \|f\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)}, \quad f \in \mathbb{X}(m), \quad m > 2.$$

In particular, when  $|\alpha|$  is sufficiently small, we have a control of the spectrum of  $L - \alpha\Lambda$  from the general perturbation theory for linear operators. However, when  $|\alpha|$  is not small, we need to use additional special structures of  $L$  and  $\Lambda$  in order to estimate the spectrum of  $L - \alpha\Lambda$ .

To overcome the difficulty for the case of not small  $|\alpha|$ , we first observe that  $L$  and  $\Lambda$  have a simple dependence on  $x_3$  variable such as

$$(3.20) \quad [\partial_{x_3}, L] = \partial_{x_3} L - L \partial_{x_3} = -\partial_{x_3},$$

$$(3.21) \quad [\partial_{x_3}, \Lambda] = 0,$$

which gives a relation  $\partial_{x_3}^k e^{t(L-\alpha\Lambda)} = e^{-kt} e^{t(L-\alpha\Lambda)} \partial_{x_3}^k$ . Hence, as a first step, we easily get an exponential decay estimate for  $\partial_{x_3}^{k_0} e^{t(L-\alpha\Lambda)}$  at least for sufficiently large  $k_0$ . So the second step is to show that  $\partial_{x_3}^{k-1} e^{t(L-\alpha\Lambda)}$  is essentially estimated by  $\partial_{x_3}^k e^{t(L-\alpha\Lambda)}$ , which enables us to get the estimate for  $e^{t(L-\alpha\Lambda)}$  itself by the backward induction on  $k$ .

For the proof of the second step we decompose  $L - \alpha\Lambda$  as follows. Set  $\Lambda_j$ ,  $j = 1, 2, 3, 4$ , as

$$(3.22) \quad \begin{aligned} \Lambda\omega &= (U^G, \nabla)\omega - (\omega, \nabla)U^G + (K_{3D} * \omega, \nabla)G - (G, \nabla)(K_{3D} * \omega) \\ &= \Lambda_1\omega - \Lambda_2\omega + \Lambda_3\omega - \Lambda_4\omega, \end{aligned}$$

and also set  $\tilde{\Lambda}_3$  as

$$(3.23) \quad \tilde{\Lambda}_3\omega = (K_{2D} * \omega_3, \nabla)G.$$

Using these notations, we define linear operators  $L_{2D,\alpha}$  and  $N$  by

$$L_{2D,\alpha}\omega = \begin{pmatrix} (\mathcal{L}_h - \frac{3}{2} - \alpha\Lambda_1 + \alpha\Lambda_2)\omega_h \\ (\mathcal{L}_h - \alpha\Lambda_1 - \alpha\tilde{\Lambda}_3)\omega_3 \end{pmatrix},$$

$$N\omega = (\Lambda_3 - \tilde{\Lambda}_3 - \Lambda_4)\omega.$$

Note that  $L_{2D,\alpha}$  is a two dimensional operator in the sense that it does not depend on  $x_3$  variable. Now we can write  $L - \alpha\Lambda$  as

$$(3.24) \quad L - \alpha\Lambda = L_{2D,\alpha} + \mathcal{L}_3 - \alpha N,$$

and thus,  $e^{t(L-\alpha\Lambda)}$  satisfies the integral equation

$$(3.25) \quad e^{t(L-\alpha\Lambda)} = e^{t(L_{2D,\alpha} + \mathcal{L}_3)} - \alpha \int_0^t e^{(t-s)(L_{2D,\alpha} + \mathcal{L}_3)} N e^{s(L-\alpha\Lambda)} ds.$$

The integral equation (3.25) is useful to get the desired estimates. We first consider the semigroup  $e^{t(L_{2D,\alpha} + \mathcal{L}_3)} = (e_h^{t(L_{2D,\alpha} + \mathcal{L}_3)}, e_3^{t(L_{2D,\alpha} + \mathcal{L}_3)})^\top$ .

**Lemma 3.1.** *Let  $m > 2$ . Then we have*

$$(3.26) \quad \partial_{x_3}^k e^{t(L_{2D,\alpha} + \mathcal{L}_3)} = e^{-kt} e^{t(L_{2D,\alpha} + \mathcal{L}_3)} \partial_{x_3}^k,$$

$$(3.27) \quad \|e_h^{t(L_{2D,\alpha} + \mathcal{L}_3)} f_h\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)} \leq C e^{-t} \|f_h\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)}, \quad f_h \in X(m)^2, \quad t > 0,$$

$$(3.28) \quad \|e_3^{t(L_{2D,\alpha} + \mathcal{L}_3)} f_3\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)} \leq C e^{-\frac{t}{2}} \|f_3\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)}, \quad f_3 \in X_0(m), \quad t > 0.$$

The equality (3.26) follows from  $[\partial_{x_3}, L_{2D,\alpha}] = 0$  and  $[\partial_{x_3}, \mathcal{L}_3] = -\partial_{x_3}$ . The details of the proof for (3.27) and (3.28) will be given in [5]. Next we need the estimate for  $N$  to control the second term in the right hand side of (3.25). We write

$$N\omega = (N_1\omega, N_2\omega, N_3\omega)^\top = (N_h\omega, N_3\omega)^\top.$$

**Lemma 3.2.** *Let  $m > 2$ . Then  $\partial_{x_3}^k N = N \partial_{x_3}^k$  holds, and we have for any  $f = (f_h, f_3)^\top \in \mathbb{X}(m)$ ,*

$$(3.29) \quad \|N_h f\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)} \leq C \|\partial_{x_3} f\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)},$$

$$(3.30) \quad \|N_3 f\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)} \leq C (\|\partial_{x_3} f\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)} + \|f_h\|_{X(m)^2}).$$

The important fact in Lemma 3.2 is that  $\|f_3\|_{X(m)}$  does not appear in the right hand side of (3.30). Combining Lemma 3.1 and Lemma 3.2 with the integral equation (3.25), we finally obtain

$$(3.31) \quad \begin{aligned} \|\partial_{x_3}^k e^{t(L-\alpha\Lambda)} f\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)} &\leq C e^{-(\frac{1}{2}+k)t} \|\partial_{x_3}^k f\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)} \\ &\quad + C \int_0^t e^{-(\frac{1}{2}+k)(t-s)} \|\partial_{x_3}^{k+1} e^{s(L-\alpha\Lambda)} f\|_{\mathbb{X}(m)} ds. \end{aligned}$$

We note that, from the parabolic regularity, we may assume that  $f$  is smooth and  $\partial_{x_3}^k f \in \mathbb{X}(m)$  for each  $k$  in (3.31). Then Theorem 3.2 is proved by the backward induction on  $k$  for  $\partial_{x_3}^k e^{t(L-\alpha\Lambda)}$ . The details will be stated in [5] and we omit them here.

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